



CITY/BOROUGH OF JUNEAU
ALASKA'S CAPITAL CITY



OFFICE OF THE MANAGER

Telephone: (907) 586-5240; Fax: (907) 586-5385
Rod_Swope@ci.juneau.ak.us

December 13, 2005

Andy Hughes, Planning Chief, Southeast Region
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
6860 Glacier Highway
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Mr. Hughes:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Draft 2006-2008 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) document. We did find the new format much easier to use and understand than the previous version. The following comments are offered for your consideration.

Predictable Transportation Planning

The projects and timelines listed in this STIP document vary considerably from past documents. We understand this is due, in part, to changes in federal funding. However, it does make it extremely difficult for communities to do any reliable planning and budgeting for transportation projects within their respective boundaries.

In addition, the CBJ fully supports the Alaska Municipal League Resolution 2005-11. This Resolution is attached for your reference. Only through a cooperative effort between DOT and local communities can Alaska's transportation infrastructure provide for sustainable and predictable statewide growth.

One of the policy objectives listed in the STIP document is the rehabilitation and upgrade of state-owned roads and the subsequent voluntary transfer to local governments. While we have been able to work cooperatively with DOT to accomplish several road transfers this past year, there is no consistent policy or plan to affect the transfer of ownership of state roads to local communities. To assist in future discussions regarding potential road transfers, it would be very useful to have a statewide policy (regardless of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) boundaries) specifying AADT levels, regional importance, roadway upgrade specifications, and future local obligations.

Local Projects

There are numerous important projects that were included in the previous 2004-2006 STIP document that no longer exist in the current document. We offer the following comments with respect to the

current scheduling and priority of specific local projects within the Borough which we believe are of the greatest importance:

North Douglas Crossing: The North Douglas Crossing project has been, and continues to be, our highest priority local project. We view development of the North Douglas Crossing as a very important transportation project and one that is necessary to ensure reasonable access and safety of North Douglas residents as well as future development of North Douglas Island.

Sunny Point: With traffic counts and turning movements far exceeding other separated grade intersections already constructed in the state or under design, we believe this is a very important transportation safety project that should not be postponed again.

Whittier to Main: This project has been removed from the STIP document. We believe it is a much needed transportation improvement and safety project that is key to the future development of the downtown Subport area. We believe that DOT needs to acquire the necessary Right-of-Way (ROW) immediately and move forward with full funding and construction of this project as soon as possible. Based on conversations with DOT staff, the future transfer and our acceptance of Sunny Point Road is dependent upon completion of the Whittier to Main project and the Sunny Point Intersection, in their entirety.

University Drive: As requested in prior years, once again we are requesting State participation on improvements to University Drive. We are withdrawing our request for Davis Avenue funding, since the CBJ has funded that with local sources. However, University Drive serves a major state function, University of Alaska housing. We are requesting 50% participation from the State of Alaska for this project.

In addition to the priority projects identified above, attached to this is a list of identified additional projects that were included in the prior 2004-2006 STIP document that continue to be important projects worthy of support as funding becomes available.

Safe Routes to Schools

The CBJ approves funds for this program, but questions the proposed near-term expenditures. Monies for design and construction of sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, and other safety improvements need to be allocated to the communities as soon as possible.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) Allocation

We urge DOT to consider Community Transportation funding similar to allocations to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO). MPO's have multiple opportunities to secure transportation project funding while the remainder of the state is entirely reliant on the Federal Aid system to construct and reconstruct local roadways. The CBJ has nominated projects with up to 50% local funding match – to no avail. However, MPO federal allocations receive state match. We believe that DOT needs to reconsider funding strategies on local roadways in non-MPO communities. Improved transportation infrastructure within communities is a state and local goal, readily supported by DOT, as evidenced by the MPO allocations. Similar financial support needs to spread to the non-MPO communities, particularly those communities that function as regional transportation and distribution centers.

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To avoid any confusion, we also want to make it clear that we continue to support the Juneau Access Improvements project and improvements to the existing marine highway system. Both of these projects are high priorities that will serve the entire region.

Finally, this letter has been reviewed and approved by the Assembly to ensure that it accurately reflects the position and priorities of the City and Borough of Juneau.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rod Swope", with a stylized, flowing script.

Rod Swope
City & Borough Manager

Attachments-2

cc w/attachments: Mayor and Assembly



**Alaska Municipal League
RESOLUTION #2005-11**

***A RESOLUTION URGING THE STATE OF ALASKA TO TAILOR
TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ALASKAN
COMMUNITIES***

WHEREAS, it is the stated mission of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to "provide for the movement of people and goods and the delivery of State services"; and

WHEREAS, the vast distances, thousands of islands, active glaciers, towering mountains, frozen tundra, and other unique features that make Alaska grand also result in unique transportation challenges that cannot be addressed with a one-size-fits-all solution; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Marine Highway System has provided service for over forty years to more than one hundred thousand Alaskan residents in 30 communities, stretching from the Aleutians through Kodiak, the Kenai Peninsula, and Prince William Sound, to Southeast Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the over 8,000 miles of the Alaska Marine Highway System have been recognized for their cultural, historical, recreational and scenic qualities through designation as an Alaska State Scenic Byway and a National Scenic Byway; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) provides a critical link between the communities of coastal Alaska, allowing for the movement of goods and services and the opportunity for economic development; and

WHEREAS, ninety percent of the municipalities, businesses, organizations, and citizens who commented on recent changes to the state's master plan, the SATP, urged the Alaska Department of Transportation to focus on strengthening the existing marine highway system rather than constructing new roads for coastal communities; and

WHEREAS, regulatory deadlines will require three of the ten AMHS vessels to be retired by 2010; and

WHEREAS, the capital investment required to connect thirty Alaskan communities with quality ferry service is comparable to the cost of constructing two new roads, which would service only four coastal communities.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska Municipal League urges the state of Alaska to:

1. Tailor transportation solutions to fit the unique challenges faced by Alaskan communities while ensuring that modes of travel between communities are safe, reliable and efficient.
2. Continue to provide, at a minimum, the current level of ferry service for our coastal communities
3. Impose a moratorium on the sale of existing AMHS vessels until funding is secure and preliminary design work is completed for replacement vessels
4. Ensure that the new vessels are part of a system-wide operating plan that includes marketing, a rational tariff structure and responsible management
5. Prioritize the concerns of local municipalities when planning transportation improvements.

Attachment 2

Community Transportation System

We have previously identified a number of important community transportation projects that were included in the Final 2004-2006 STIP document but have been removed from the latest STIP. The following projects should continue to receive consideration:

- Douglas Highway Safety Improvements Cordova Street to Douglas	\$4,350,000
- Industrial Boulevard Widening & Sidewalk	\$2,445,000
- Old Dairy Road Resurfacing & Shoulder Widening, Phase 2	\$ 330,000
- Old Glacier Highway North, Resurfacing & Shoulder Widening	\$ 640,000
- Riverside Drive (Upper) Rehabilitation & Traffic Calming	\$4,200,000

The public transit system in any community is important for the efficient and safe transportation of its citizens. We have previously identified a number of important community needs and projects for maintaining and improving our public transit system that have been eliminated from the current STIP which we continue to support as follows:

- Capital Transit Paratransit Vans	\$ 416,000
- Capital Transit, Expand & Refurbish Operations Facility	\$ 140,000
- Construct Nugget Mall Transit Center	\$ 600,000
- Bus Passenger Shelters	\$ 150,000

Ferry Boat Program

We note that several Alaska Marine Highway System projects of interest to Juneau, as well as Southeast Alaska in general, have been delayed or cancelled. Those of greatest significance, which we hope can be restored, are as follows:

- New Mainline Ferry	\$120,000,000
- New Northern Panhandle Ferry	\$ 45,000,000
- Fairweather Refurbishment	\$ 2,300,000
- FVF Support Center at Auke Bay	\$ 4,500,000

National Highway System

We continue to support the following transportation improvements included in the Final 2004-2006 STIP as follows:

- Egan Drive: Harbor Area Intersection Improvements	\$ 3,200,000
- Egan Drive: Salmon Creek Intersection Improvements	\$14,400,000
- Egan Drive: Intersection Improvements (Tenth Street)	\$ 6,400,000
- Egan Drive: Intersection Improvements (Vanderbilt Hill)	\$13,780,000
- Glacier Highway: Fritz Cove Road to Auke Bay Ferry Terminal	\$13,700,000